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the COMICS Connection

"Just For The Fun Of It"

SOUND-OFF!
Irate Letters from Irate Readers
Page 3

FANDOM POLL:
Select the Best Penciller and Costumes in Comics
page 17

ARTICLE:
X-Men VS Teen Titans (Pt. II)
page 22

REVIEWS:
The Best
page 20

This issue begins a look back at John Byrne's Marvel years. Page 11.

X-Men TM and ©copyright 1987
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EDITORIAL

This time out I'd like to discuss a problem that rural fans like myself have had with one specific comics publisher. The problem ? DC's inability to keep us informed about new projects and creator changes. Since rural fans can't run down to their local comics shop every week (or day) we must order our books from a subscription service. We mail our orders each month; they send us our books. Easy right? Wrong. The problem arises when we have to get our orders in 2 to 3 months before the books are published so that our service has ample time to order and receive the books from their distributor. In the case of DC comics, they don't provide us with **any** information on books 2 or 3 months away. **DC Releases**, a monthly give-away, is practically worthless, and nearly always late. It's usually released just in time to see if I ordered **last** month's books correctly.

As an example, **Swamp Thing Annual** No. 3 and **Phantom Stranger** No. 1 appeared on my latest order form. Who are the writers on these books? Who are the artists? I have no idea. Yet, I have to order them **now** if I want them (and the latest **DC Releases** tells me nothing.) At least **Marvel Age** gives me a quick creator run-down for the following month's books. So does First, and Eclipse, and Comico, and Blackthorne, and... well, you get the idea. In a recent "Meanwhile" column, Dick Giordano listed some upcoming DC projects for **next year.** I wish he'd let us know what's coming up next **month!**

Bradd Mielke Editor TCC

Contributors' Information

(Important: Writers and Artists should send Xerox copies only. Please, don't send us your originals.)

Writers:

1) We're looking for series reviews on recent fan favorite **comic series** such as Watchmen, Grell's Green Arrow, Byrne's Superman, Moore's Swamp Thing, X-Factor, The Punisher, and others.
2) We're looking for critiques (articles) on the careers of fan favorite artists. We're currently running a John Byrne series. Frank Miller, Walt Simonson, George Perez, John Buscema, Mike Golden, and Mike Grell are just some of those we'd like to do in the future.

Artists:

We'll use artwork of popular characters for our covers as we receive it. We also need single panel cartoons about comics for interior pages. Remember to watch for our art contests which will run in nearly every issue.

Letter Writers:

1) Our regular letter column, Sound Off, is for you. It lets you spout off about anything you want. Long or short letters—just send them.
2) Letters with a theme will be used in the form of an article when enough letters on one subject are received. (See this issue's X-Men vs. Teen Titans). The articles we are planning include: 1) John Byrne: Is he better than ever, or was he better before? 2) Are there too many mutants or mutant team books? 3) What went wrong with the Titans?

Send all submissions, contributions, and correspondence to the address below. (If you wish a personal reply, you **must** include a SASE.)

Milky Way Graphics
Box 381
Sleepy Eye, MN 56085

The Comics Connection is published monthly by Milky Way Graphics, Box 381 Sleepy Eye, MN 56085.
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SOUND-OFF!!

Malcom Sanders
Rochester, MN

Hurray! Marvel no longer dominates the comic book world. I buy over 30 comics a month now and only one, **Thor**, is a Marvel. What's even better is that only 4 of the remainder are DC's. That's right; First, Eclipse, and Comico put out so much great stuff that I no longer have to rely on the repeating garbage of the big two to get my monthy comics' fix. Independents rule.

Lisa Walkerton
Bismark, ND

Paul Smith. Paul Smith. The name seems to ring a bell. Paul Smith. Hmmmm? I got it! He's the guy who drew **X-Men** for a couple of years, did a few issues of **Dr. Strange** and then vanished off the face of the Earth. The last I heard he was supposed to be drawing a Spiderman graphic novel. what's up? I mean, this guy actually made me interested in Marvel, X-Men, and Chris Claremont again. Did he burn out? Is he back in animation? Is he working on projects for other companies? does anybody know?

(Editor's note: No. Seriously, last I heard, Paul was going to be doing some work on **American Flagg** for First. Paul, if you're reading this, we'd all like to know what you've been up to.)

Comico does cartoon adaptions...

Tod Eisenstein
Brooklyn, NY

How come when George Perez left **Teen Titans** everybody made a big deal out of it, but when John Romita Jr. sort of shifted over to **Star Brand** from **X-Men,** no one said anything? Don't people realize that X-Men, the most popular book in America, Hasn't had a regular penciller for over a year now? I'll admit that some of the fill-ins have been pretty good, but the book isn't the same since Romita left. Is there a chance he'll be coming back now that he's left **Star Brand?**

(Editor's note: As of this writing, there is no news on John's future projects. Marc Sylvestri and Dan Green are now the regular art team on **X-Men**.)

Matt Samson
Beverly Hills, MI

I don't know why George Perez is wasting his time on **Wonder Woman.** DC should give George another **Crisis** like book to work on and cancel **WW.**

Karl Schneider
Birstol, TN

There once was a time, in the mid '70's, when comics hit their peak. Right in the middle of this new Golden Age was a talent who could write just about any character in comics. His name was Steve Englehart. Now, Steve's back on the scene and all I can say is, "What happened?" It might be that my tastes are more sophisticated than they use to be, but I can't believe anyone's writing ability could deteriorate so quickly. The drek he attempts to pass off as stories each month in **West Coast Avenger, Green Lantern Corps, Silver Surfer,** and **Fantastic Four** is worse than his **Coyote** work. I used to think Englehart was one of the best comic scripters of all-time, now I'd just as soon read a Mantlo book.

Albert Myers
Tempe, AZ

It's about time that the Punisher got his own monthly book. With a great writer/artist team like Baron and Janson I predict this will be **the** hot book of 1987.
(Editor's note: I like this book, too. For a more lengthy review, check out Issue *#4* of **The Comics Connection.)**

Phillip George
Los Angeles, CA

Englehart's new work Drek?

Now that John Byrne has had a chance to settle in on **Superman** I'd like to make a few observations. First of all, John draws the character better than anyone except Neal Adams. I just wish I knew why he decided to make Lois Lane a redhead. His stories, however, are just average superman stories. I think the biggest problem lies in the format of the books themselves. One and two issue stories just don't leave enough room for continuing subplots, neither do background characters like Jimmy Olson and Lana Lang who have very little going on in their lives. A team book, like John's **Fantastic Four** produces more interaction and more interesting stories. That series had the same appeal as a T.V. show like **St. Elsewhere** or **L.A. Law.** If it's any consolation, at least I read **Superman** and **Action** now. I didn't use to.

Timothy Gronewald
Charlotte, NC

DC certainly is getting its money's worth with John Byrne. He writes and draws two books a month and still has time to draw lots of covers, specials, and house ads. This year alone it seems like he's contributed to just about every annual or special DC printed. Now I hear he's going to be drawing **Star Brand** for Marvel, too. Is there anybody faster? Doesn't he get sick of it?
(Editor's note: If he is sick of it, he certainly doesn't show it in his work. When it comes to drawing fast, John Buscema's got a pretty quick pencil as well. It wasn't that long ago that he was drawing close to 100 pages of Conan a month. Jack Kirby's output was right up there too.)

Peggy Thurston
New York, NY

I'm sick and tired of everybody dumping on DC and Marvel, especially the other comic book publishers. It wasn't too long ago that they said Marvel was reprinting their "junk book" just to tie up marketplace money. Notice who's glutting the market with junk now. Eclipse was one of the biggest complainers, now they put out more garbage books than anybody. **Airboy? The New Wave?** Does anyone beside Don Thompson like this stuff? **Miracleman's** the biggest joke of all. The first few issues were really good, but then they got two or three new artists, missed deadlines, reprinted junk from the 50's and to top if all off, they raised the cover price, **twice.**

Comico's publishing cartoon adaptions and they act like they have the best books since **Daredevil.** Blackthorne's unloading the **Flintstones** and **Gumby** at two bucks a pop. Aarrgghl! Now I hear First is going to release its second **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle** graphic novel. Folks, wake up; it's not too late to pay 75¢ for a regular DC or Marvel.

Jim Cartwright
Address withheld by request

Thanks for inviting me to "Sound-Off" about the current comic book scene. Subject number one: Comics Censorship.

Airboy, New Wave, "Does anybody like these books?

Though this topic has been trampled to death in the fan press for the past several months by both fans and pros alike, I'd still like to take a few moments to discuss my views on an issue that has proven so heated that people like Frank Miller, Alan Moore, and Marv Wolfman would rather stop working for DC than let DC "rate" their work according to codes they had no power in forming. As much as I admire their ability to "put their money where their mouths are," I can't say I can agree with them or their arguments. Quite simply, putting a rating on a comic book is not censorship; it's merely a guideline for retailers, warning them of possible conflicts that may result if they sell these books to younger customers. Period.

Asking a small retailer to read 300-500 different comic books a month to see if a problem might exist is ridiculous. Yes, I said **reading.** Glancing at a book and reading a page or two aren't always enough to let you know that a book might cause a problem. Take DC's **Vigilante** for instance. It looks like a regular DC comic; it even has ads of a regular DC comic, but often times its language isn't what you'd want an average third grader to read.

Of course there's no "Universal Ratings System" that will satisfy all customers (or their protests) in all parts of the country. Small town midwesterners will always be, for the most part, more conservative than their east and west coast counterparts. But what such a ratings system would do is take the responsibility of selling a "universally" accepted code book out of the hands of the local retailer, who doesn't have the funds to defend himself if a protest erupts, and

places it where it aught to be, in the hands of a financially able publisher who can defend his rating in court, if need be.

DC isn't asking creator's to change their work, they're telling creators that if certain things appear in their work, that work won't be available to children. Keeping certain materials out of the purchasing hands of children has always been a good idea. Parents who wish to circumvent such a system because they feel its wrong, or because they think **their** children are ready for what other children may not be, merely have to buy the restricted product, whatever it is, and give it to their child, whether it be cigarettes, beer, **Playboy,** or the latest copy of Swampthing. A ratings system is a safe-guard that lets parents determine what their children read **before** they bring it home.

Alan Moore, in a letter to **CBG** wrote that he lets his children read whatever holds their interest and that he as a parent has the final say on what they read, as all (I hope I'm not misquoting him on this; I'm not trying to. I'm merely trying to paraphrase a very lengthy, well written letter) parents should. On this matter we agree completely. The problem [illegible], and Moore didn't point this out, is that parents don't always get to **see** what their children read.

"What is it about Chaykin's work that makes fans go wild?"

I remember buying many Warren magazines **(Vampirella, Creepy, Eerie,** and **1994)** when I was younger (12-15) at my local bookstore. I didn't buy them because the stories were great; I bought them because of all the fantastically drawn naked women that were in them. And I continued to buy them every month along with the rest of my comics. When I got home, I quickly hid my Warrens and showed the rest to my Dad who also collected some comics on a regular basis.

Why did I buy these magazines? Because I couldn't legally buy **Playboy,** or **Penthouse**, and the Warrens were the closest thing I could get. (Does anyone else remember the All-King Kong issue that substituted a 70 foot naked woman for the title character?) Should these magazines have been rated so that I couldn't get my sweaty little palms on them? Of course they should have been. So should other comics that provide nudity that may titilate younger readers. Notice I used the word "may" in my last sentence. Take it from the voice of experience, **any** nudity is enough to make a small boy buy a comic that he otherwise would have no interest in. If the rating system says he's not old enough to buy it, he can't. If on the other hand,another child wants to buy it because it has a great story by Alan Moore and super art by Dave Gibbons, and if he convinces his mom or dad to buy it for him even though there is some nudity (or swearing, or violence, or whatever) in it, he can get the book. If he can't convince his parents that he should have it because **they** don't think he's old enough, or ready for it, or because its morally

wrong, the system worked. Parents have the last word. Without a ratings system publishers, retailers, and creators have the last word. They shouldn't.

Placing the responsibility of selling such books in the hands of local retailers doesn't make any more sense than letting local movie theater owners rate movies to their standards. Ratings for movies aren't meant to be universally accepted, neither will comic ratings. What they will do is give everyone common ground to stand on.

Finally, the reason I'm advocating ratings for comics isn't because some outside force will do it if we don't; I'm advocating it because it's the right thing to do. Let **adults** buy anything they desire, but let parents be responsible for what **their** children read. Ratings are a step in the right direction.

Hoyt Vernard
Lycoming, PA

You told me you wanted this letter to be irate? Okay. Grrrr! I hate being told what to do! How was that? (Editor's note: A very poor attempt at humor.) I guess I've kind of mellowed since the last time I wrote you. I'm less concerned about many of the comics I used to read and am currently looking for something more interesting than **Teen Titans,** but something easier to follow than the first 15 issues of **American Flagg.** Just what is it, by the way, about Howard Chaykin's work that makes so many fans go wild? (Aha! Something to get irritated about.) I know we've

Continued on P15

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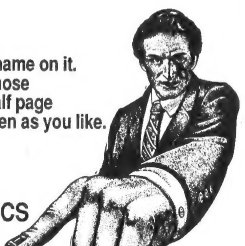

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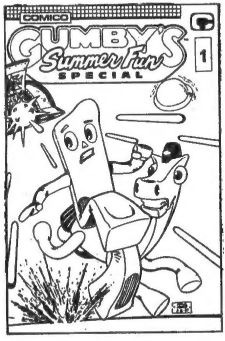
NEWSBRIEFS

Art Adams drew Comico's **Gumby Summer Special**...Walt Simonson is scheduled to write **The Avengers** starting with issue No. 290... After signing a release-of-rights statement, Jack Kirby will finally receive 1,800 to 2,100 of the more than 10,000 pages of artwork he did for Marvel..**Spellbound** will be a 6 issue, bi-weekly mini-series from Marvel this fall. It will be written by Loise Simonson, pencilled by Terry Shoemaker, and inked by Carl Potts... Matt Wagner's **Grendel**, already optioned for a film, is now set to be a Ballantine novel as well. Wagner will provide story, cover, and chapter illustrations...Because of the recent B&W implosion, Renegade has announced they will be taking on no new projects... First's **Lone Wolf and Cub** No.1 has sold out its second printing and a third printing of 25,000 is now planned...**Underdog, Mighty Mouse,** and **Heckle and Jeckle** now have their own comics thanks to Spotlight Comics Inc. Cover price for each full color comic is $1.50...**Millenium,** DC's eight issue, weekly comic series will have 35 cross-overs in two months, with nearly every comic in the DC Universe affected... A screenplay for the **Batman** movie has been approved by DC. Don't look for the movie until Christmas 1988 at the earliest... Talk is also hot about a new **Swamp Thing** movie based on the Alan Moore storyline...**Sledgehammer,** The ABC TV show, may be getting its own Marvel comic... Frank Miller's **Dark Knight** has been nominated for a Hugo...**Empire Lanes** No. 3 by Northern Lights publishing has finally shipped...**The Collection,** a 64 page graphic novel by **Ninja** artist Kevin Farrel will be released this summer by Eternity. Price is $2.95...**Green Arrow: The Long Bow Hunter** No. 2 has sold out. A second printing is planned... NBM has announced that, starting in August, they will release Roy Crane's classic comic strip, **Wash Tubbs** in a quarterly 18 volume complete reprint series. Each 192 page, 11 by 8½ book will be available in both paperback and hardcover editions... This summer Malibu Comics will be releasing 3 brand new titles, **Dark Wolf, Stealth Force,** and **Libby Ellis.** Each is 32 pages, B&W with full color covers and a $1.95 cover price... Esteban Moroto will be drawing the new DC **Amethyst** series. Story will be by Keith Giffen and Mindy

Newell... Blackthorne will be publishing **Bravestarr,** an adaption of the new animated TV series... Comico has signed to publish a **Max Headroom** comic. A 3-D release is scheduled for this fall, written by Mike Baron. A regular series is scheduled for next year... **Strike**, a new superhero comic by Chuck Dixon and Tom Lyle will be released in August from Eclipse...**P.J. Warlock** has been suspended after 3 issues. The reason? Bill Schorr's got another syndicated comic strip, **Grizwells,** and no longer has the time to do it... Vince Argondezzi will be the regular **Infinity Inc.** penciller for the foreseeable future...**Outcasts** is a new 12 issue maxi-series from DC. It's by John Wagner, Alan Grant, Cam Kennedy, and Steve Montano... DC has launched a new comics company, Piranah Press, which wants to reach a more sophisticated comics reading audience... Hot on last year's "Mutant Massacre" storyline comes this fall's "Fall of Mutants" storyline. It will affect **X-Men, X-Factor,** and **New Mutants... Elementals** from Comico is now monthly... Epic Comics latest title is **Video Jack** by Cary Bates, Keith Giffen, and Dave Hunt... Blackthorne has just released **Dick Tracy: The Unprinted Stories** No. 1, a quarterly 48 page B&W comic for $2.95...**Thorgal: The Archers** will appear in August from the Donning company...**Agent Unknown** No. 1 is scheduled for release in October from Renegade... More news next month...



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JOHN BYRNE

THE EARLY YEARS (PART II)

by Hoyt Vernard

John Byrne's first regular assignment for Marvel was **Iron Fist**. Collaborating with now famous X-writer Chris Claremont, he pencilled 15 issues of that series. It's important to remember that, at the time, neither Byrne nor Claremont had yet achieved fan favorite status. If anything, just the opposite was true. **Iron Fist** was cancelled after those 15 issues, and **X-Men**, with Dave Cockrum at the artistic helm was limping along at a bi-monthly pace, selling no better than any other Marvel comic. (Looking now at the recent **X-Men Classic** series, most fans would agree the stories were'nt any better than other Marvel comics, either.) John Byrne's other Marvel book, **The Champions**, was also selling poorly.

So how come John Byrne got off to such a rocky start at Marvel? Though some have pointed to the inconsistent quality inking on the **Iron Fist** book for its failure, in all fairness, only the first issue in that series, featuring the horrendous inking of Al McWilliams who obscured John's pencils more than he delineated them, was bad, Frank Chiaramonte did a beautiful job of embellishing John's pencils as the series regular inker. Fill-in work by Dan Adkins, though not up to the standards of Chiaramonte, was still admirable. No, I believe the reason this book failed was simply that fans just didn't want another "Kung Fu" book. Its a shame, too, because the quality of this book was often times better than that of other Marvel comics from the same period.

The reason for **The Champions** failing is quite a different

FOR THE NEXT FEW HOURS, OUR MISMATCHED DUO PROCEEDS FROM ONE NIGHTMARISH RESCUE TO THE NEXT, UNTIL...
WE CONTACTED BILL FOSTER* AND HANK PYM FOR AN ANTIDOTE TO THE BEES' STINGS--BUT CAN THEY REVEAL IT BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE TO DO ANY GOOD?
*AKA BLACK GOLIATH, BIO-CHEMIST AND PART-TIME CHAMPION--HA CHE.

The Champions offered former X-Men, The Angel...

story. Bob Layton handled most of the inking on that series, giving John's pencils the slicker Austin-like look that fans soon grew to appreciate. The look of this book was solid; the problem of this series arose with the inability of Bill Mantlo to write a credible team book. Characters had no backgrounds, no clearly defined powers, and no real personality distinctions. The book suffered a great deal as a result and was soon cancelled.

It should be interesting to note that, in the past, very few artists became fan favorites with their first work. Michael Golden, George Perez, J.L. Garcia-Lopez, and Keith Giffen all had varying length trial periods before editors and fans started to notice them. It's only in recent years that artists have become "instant fan

...It also offered the smooth inking of Mike Esposito over Byrne's dynamic pencils.

It's artwork like this on Star-Lord that so impressed Marvel Staffers with the Byrne/Austin art team.

favorites," and much of that has to do with shrewd editorial judgement. Talents like Paul Smith and Art Adams were teamed with the best of inkers, on top books, immediately upon entering the business and rose to fan prominence overnight.

John Byrne, along with the rest of the now fan favorite artists listed at the beginning of the last paragraph, began their careers back in the mid-70's when editorial policy was different than it is today. Editors were hesitant to promote newcomers to top books because they didn't want to take these books away from veterans who had "paid their dues" to get them. The fan market had not yet been established and quantity was still more important than quality when it came to putting out their books. It didn't matter if you could draw **better** than some other artist, you had to prove that you could draw **faster.** Teaming pencillers and inkers was just one way of getting the job done faster. Again, it wasn't how well you inked, but how fast you could cover the other guy's pencils. Jobs had to get done, and loyal veterans were given jobs over hot newcomers.

So what finally caused John

HEADS UP, BUB! WOLVERINE'S COMIN' AT CHA!
HUH?!?
THE MANIAC'S COMING THROUGH THE WINDOW! I COME HERE LOOKING FOR HELP, AND END UP FIGHTING FOR MY LIFE!
BEHIND ME--- THAT SUDDEN STENCH OF BRIMSTONE! WHAT--?!

Iron Fist No. 15 even had a guest appearance by the X-Men. Inking courtesy of Dan Green, now regular X-Men inker.

Byrne to get noticed? I believe the answer to that question is inker Terry Austin. Fresh off the Englrhart/Rogers **Batman** stories, Austin teamed with Claremont and Byrne on a B&W **Marvel Preview** story, "Star-Lord." It was 1976 and I can still remember the Marvel Bullpen Bulletins page(well, **not word for word**, but I do remember the geist of it.) "Item: Everyone at the bullpen is going absolutely bonkers over the B&W pages Terry Austin is bringing in on the Star-Lord story he and John Byrne are drawing. No one can believe how good it is; they're drooling; they're eyes are bugging out; they're mouths are hanging down to the bullpen floor; and they can't wait to see more... If you only buy one comic book **this year**, buy this one." Marvel hype aside, it's obvious that fellow Marvel staffers were impressed with the way this art team looked together. Even today, many fans still believe this was the best comics' art team ever assembled.

Funny thing is, the book itself didn't sell well. As this was 1976, **Star Wars** hadn't even been released yet. The public was not yet ready or hungry for this type of space opera. **Marvel Preview** never sold extremely well, and this issue was no exception. What this story **did do** was put the names of Byrne and Austin on the tip of every Marvel editor's tongue. When it came to selecting a new art team for the **X-Men** book, after Cockrum decided to leave, the decision wasn't very difficult. The rest, as they say, is history.

(We'll be back in a few issues with another installment in this series. John Byrne: The Mutant Years.)

Suggestion to Marvel: with all the recent reprint work you've been doing, how about reprinting IF, 1-15, in trade paperback form? Surely Claremont and Byrne's first collaboration would warrant such a move, wouldn't it?

Continued from P7

discussed this in the past (Bradd, the editor is a friend of mine) and you agree with me, but for other fans who don't know what I'm talking about, let me put it briefly. Howard Chaykin can't write or draw very well. More briefly? Howard Chaykin's work stinks. Why would anyone want to read a comic three times just to try to figure out what's going on? Why would anyone take twice the normal time just to read it the first time? It doesn't take twice as long because the story's more intricate or sophisticated, it takes twice as long because you're never quite sure which thought ballon, dialog balloon, or caption to read next, and when you finally figure it out, it's so poorly written, you still don't know what's happening. It's as if Howard gets this perverted sence of staisfaction out of just dropping captions on a page, and drawing artwork, in any random order, around it. That's not storytelling. Alan Moore writes sophisticated, intricately plotted stories. The difference between him and Howard is that Alan is a writer. Actually, I do like the way Chaykin's artwork **looks**, it's just that, as a storyteller, Chaykin needs a strong editor. I'll try to think of something else for next time.

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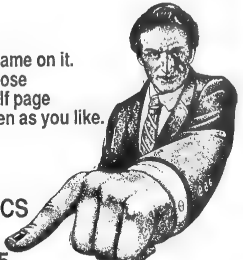

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FANDOM POLL

Round II and the finals of Comics' Best Pencillers

Okay, time for round II. If you missed last month, a small inset is included so that you can still vote for favorite penciller. Same rules as last time. Pick your favorite between the two listed and advance him to the next round. Pick an overall winner from this month's and last month's winners. Please fill in the names in each round.

John Bolton
Walt Simonson

Dave Sim
Dave Stevens

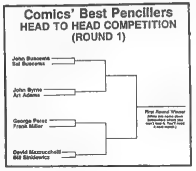
Bill Willingham
George Freeman

Dave Gibbons
Howard Chaykin

Special Vote

Name one penciller who should have been listed on this poll and wasn't.
(Name)

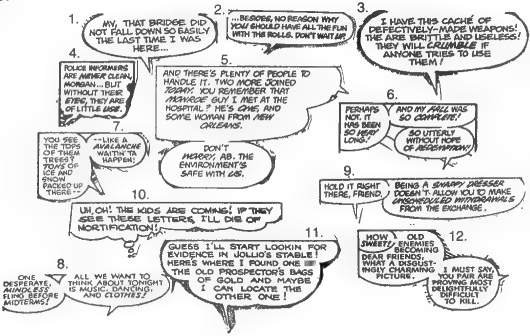
Last month's ballot (use to choose a finalist if you missed last month.)



Elsewhere in this book you have the chance to redesign the worst costume in comics. Here you tell us who you think has
The BEST Costume in Comics:
Character (name)

FULL OF HOT AIR
CONTEST PUZZLE

These word balloons appeared in DC, Marvel, and Gladstone comics cover dated September 1987. Identify the book each appeared in. Two winners will be selected from all correct entries received and each will win a grab bag of 30 new and used comics.


1.
MY, THAT BRIDGE DID NOT FALL DOWN SO EASILY THE LAST TIME I WAS HERE...
2.
...BESIDES, NO REASON WHY YOU SHOULD HAVE ALL THE FUN WITH THIS ROLL-A. DON'T WAIT UP.
3.
I HAVE THIS CACHE OF DEFECTIVELY-MADE WEAPONS! THEY ARE BRITTLE AND USELESS! THEY WILL CRUMBLE IF ANYONE TRIES TO USE THEM!
4.
POLICE INFORMERS ARE NEVER CLEAN, MORGAN... BUT WITHOUT THEM, EITHER, THEY ARE OF LITTLE USE.
5.
AND THERE'S PLENTY OF PEOPLE TO HANDLE IT. TWO MORE JOINED TODAY! YOU REMEMBER THAT MANIACAL GUY I MET AT THE HOSPITAL? HE'S GONE, AND SOME WOMAN FROM NEW ORLEANS.
6.
PERHAPS NOT. IT HAS BEEN SO VERY LONG.
AND MY FALL WAS SO COMPLETE!
SO UTTERLY WITHOUT HOPE OF REDEMPTION!
7.
YOU SEE THE TOPS OF THEM TREES? TOPS OF THE WORLD! SOON PACKED UP THERE --
--LIKE A AVALANCHE WAITIN' TA HAPPEN!
DON'T WORRY, AB. THE ENVIRONMENT'S SAFE WITH US.
8.
ONE DESPERATE, MUNDANE ESS FLING BEFORE MIDTERMS?
ALL WE WANT TO THINK ABOUT TONIGHT IS MUSIC, DANCING, AND CLOTHES?
9.
HOLD IT RIGHT THERE, FRIEND.
BEING A SMARMY DRESSER DOESN'T ALLOW YOU TO MAKE UNSCHEDULED WITHDRAWALS FROM THE EXCHANGE.
10.
UH, OH! THE KIDS ARE COMING! IF THEY SEE THESE LETTERS, I'LL DIE OF MORTIFICATION!
11.
GUESS I'LL START LOOKIN FOR EVIDENCE IN JOLLIO'S STABLE! HERE'S WHERE I FOUND ONE THE OLD PROSPECTOR'S BAGS OF GOLD AND MAYBE I CAN LOCATE THE OTHER ONE!
12.
HOW SWEET! OLD ENEMIES BECOMING DEAR FRIENDS. WHAT A DISGUSTINGLY CHARMING PICTURE.
I MUST SAY, YOU PAIR ARE PROVING MOST DELIGHTFULLY DIFFICULT TO KILL.

All entries must be received by September 15, 1987. Send to:

Puzzle #2
c/o Milky Way Graphics
Box 381
Sleepy Eye, MN 56085

Title of Comic

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.
11.
12.

Redesign the Worst Costume in Comics!

So you think Robin has the worst costume in comics? What's that, you think Spiderman's new one is worse? How about Flash's? or Wonder Woman's? Well, whoever you think has the worst, this is your chance to do something about it. Pick a character with an awful costume (it doesn't have to be one we mentioned) and design him, her, or it a better one. The one restriction is that the character must appear regularly in a First, Eclipse, DC, Marvel. or Comico comic. First prize is $20; runners up will receive comic grab bags. (Send a B&W version **and** a colored version of the new costume design. If you want them back send along an envelope with your name on it and enough postage to get it back to you. This is called a SASE.) Winners will be printed in a future issue. Beware: If your design is worse than the current one, we may print that too.

Costume Contest
c/o Milky Way Graphics
Box 381
Sleepy Eye, MN 56085

Hurry. Contest ends September 15, 1987

Example: I gave the Hulk suspenders so his pants won't fall down when he turns back to Bruce Banner.

REVIEWS:
THE BEST

Last time, I reviewed the best books from the previous 12 months. Listing "The Best" is going to be an ongoing project on my part. Each month I'll review that month's best books, attempting to give you insights on which books you should spend your money. Remember, I'll review books as I **receive** them, so if a book was released, say, 5 months ago, it'll still be reviewed with this month's comics because **to me** it's current. If your book isn't listed here, it might be because I haven't read it. You can send review copies to:

Milky Way Graphic
Box 381
Sleepy Eye, MN 56085

Mage: The Hero Discovered was this month's best book.

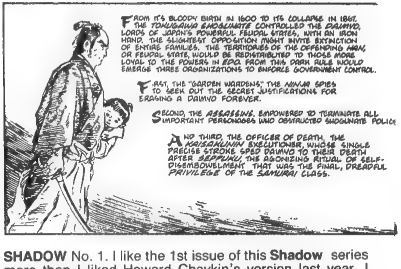
MAGE: THE HERO DISCOVERED. This full color trade paperback from the Donning Company is a compilation of the first 5 issues of the **Mage** comic series. After reading this book, I noticed that Don Thompson **(CBG)**, Kim Thompson **(Amazing Heroes)**, and Heidi MacDonald **(CBG)** had already given this series rave reviews. If you need yet another, before you buy this book, look no further. I'm giving it right here. It really is spectacular. Matt Wagner, who is both artist and writer develops into a storyteller before your very eyes. His skill as an artist grows with each issue, so much so, that, by the time you finished the last few pages of this book, you'll have a hard time waiting for the next volume in this series to be released.

The coloring is gorgeous as well. If you're like me and never read the original series when it was printed in B&W by Comico, this is your chance to catch up. by the way I'm not the kind of guy who normally recommends $12.95 comic books. With **Mage**, you get your money's worth.

The Rest

LONE WOLF AND CUB No. 1. To tell you the truth, I'm disappointed in this book. The price, $1.95 for 96 pages (future issues 64 pages) is fantastic. The art is also very good. I even like the lettering a lot. I just don't care much for the story. Though the plots are strong, imaginitive, and appealing the dialog is at best simplistic. Background information is given in big captions every few pages rather than making such background information part of the actual storyline. I found that extremely annoying. I'd much prefer to see this information more evenly paced, giving more balance to the overall story.

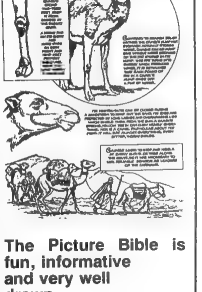
As I stated earlier, the plots are excellent. The thought of a Samurai warrior who must fend for his small child while fighting the hordes he contracts to slaughter is indeed interesting and sets up many interesting situations. Frank Miller said he enjoyed these stories **before** they were translated from Japanese. That might give you an idea how simplistic the captions and dialog are. I'll continue buying this book just for the beautiful art of Goseki Kojima. But be cautioned, these stories are an awfully quick read.


FROM IT'S BLOODY BIRTH IN 1600 TO ITS COLLAPSE IN 1868, THE TOKUGAWA SHOGUNATE CONTROLLED THE DAIMYO, LORDS OF JAPAN'S POWERFUL FEUDAL STATES, WITH AN IRON HAND. THE SLIGHTEST OPPOSITION MIGHT INVITE EXTINCTION OF ENTIRE FAMILIES. THE TERRITORIES OF THE OFFENDING WAR OR FEUDAL STATE WOULD BE REDISTRIBUTED TO THOSE MORE LOYAL TO THE POWERS IN EDO. FROM THIS DARK RULE WOULD EMERGE THREE ORGANIZATIONS TO ENSURE GOVERNMENT CONTROL.
FIRST, THE "SHADOW WARRIORS", THE NINJA SPIES TO SEEK OUT THE SECRET JUSTIFICATIONS FOR ERADING A DAIMYO FOREVER.
SECOND, THE ASSASSINS, EMPOWERED TO TERMINATE ALL IMPORTANT PERSONAGES WHO OBSTRUCTED SHOGUNATE POLICY.
AND THIRD, THE OFFICER OF DEATH, THE KAISHAKUNIN EXECUTIONER, WHOSE SINGLE PRECISE STROKE SPED DOWNO TO THEIR DEATH AFTER SKEPPUKU, THE AGONIZING RITUAL OF SELF-DISEMBOWELMENT THAT WAS THE FINAL, DREADFUL PRIVILEGE OF THE SAMURAI CLASS.

The art on Lone Wolf and Cub is masterful. The dialog and captions are paced somewhat erratically.

SHADOW No. 1. I like the 1st issue of this **Shadow** series more than I liked Howard Chaykin's version last year. I prefer Bill Sienkiewicz' exaggerated ink renderings to Chaykin's "never quite sure where to look next" composite pages. I also enjoyed Andrew Helfer's readable script to Howie's "never sure where to read next and what should I leave out this time" captions and dialog. But just because I liked it **more**, doesn't mean I liked it. Though Bill can still manage to tell a story with his art, those ink lines he leaves splattered all over the page are becoming increasingly harder to look at. What really irritates me about this book, and last year's series as well, is that this character is most definitely **not** the Shadow; it's an awful character that Chaykin created last year and DC is merely using the name because they bought the rights to him. My only hope for a **real** Shadow comic appeared in this book's "afterward". It said that Len Wein was interested in doing just such a book as an annual or mini-series. I hope DC lets him; and I Hope Len focuses more on the paperbacks than the radio series and other comics.

THE PICTURE BIBLE FOR ALL AGES. And now for something completely different... The David C. Cook publishing company originally released this B&W, comic book, paperback version of the Bible back in 1973 and it has seen several reprintings since. The incredibly beautiful artwork by Andre LeBlanc alone should put these volumes on the shelves of all real comic book fans. His attention to detail in clothing, architecture, and backgrounds is tremendous. (He also draws camels better than anyone.) If you want to compare his art to someone more well known in comic book circles, you'd have to say it's sort of a mix between Neal Adams and Nester Redondo, though not nearly as dynamic as either. Either way you really should take a look at it. Aided by the clear, easy to follow script by Iva Hoth, this is one translation of the Bible very few people would consider boring. The best part of all is the price. Each of the 6 (160 page) volumes is only $2.25 and should be available at most Christian bookstores across the country. If they don't have it, ask!



The Picture Bible is fun, informative and very well drawn.

X-Men vs. Teen Titans:
The fans speak out!

(This is part two of a reprint series from last year's *Fan Connection*.)

Michael Pickens
Centerburg, Ohio

Question of the month: Which book is better, **Titans** or **X-Men**? Disregarding the supremely hateful hardcover/softcover format of the **Titans** and the dreadful overexposure of **X-Men**, I'd have to wimp out and say they're both too different to call one superior to the other. The art on both books varies from classic to lousy and I'm not going to try to figure out whether Perez is better than Byrne so we'll just stick to the writing and Claremont Vs. Wolfman (sounds like an off-broadway play). Claremont's writing is cerebral, laden with plot ideas and incredible concepts. Sometimes it hurts the book; Claremont is **always** introducing one more subplot or going off in a new direction, neglecting the forty-three he's always got brewing.

Wolfman, on the other hand, writes for impact, he shoots for intense emotion in his plots. This causes problems sometimes also, not only do his characters often act like outpatients (I wonder if Mr. Wolfman's wife and daughter stand at the door as he leaves for work and go, "Marv! Marv! Oh my . . . Maaaaaaarrrrvvvvv!!) but the man's killed more people than the Hundred Years War. Both Claremont and Wolfman are excellent writers and they both have fine casts to work with. Cases could be made for both of them; it'd be just as easy for me to say I get sick of seeing one of the Titans having a fit every month and prefer the fresh, original innovations of **X-Men** as it would for me to point out there's nothing at all exciting about a bunch of people sitting around talking about how miserable there lives are and how much better **Titan's** action-packed format is. It's a heart-or-head choice, actually. Lemme try to make a clear indication. If I were going to testify to a committee on whether comics were an honest, adult form of entertainment, I'd show them **X-Men.** But if I were trying to hook a non-fan, I'd show him some **Titans.** Actually I like **Power Pack** better'n either of them, but you didn't ask about that.

Tammy Elkind
New York, NY

Teen Titans is clearly superior. Why? Because Marv Wolfman writes stories about human characters who show real emotion. I care about what happens to Dick, Kory, Vic, Donna, and Gar. They might be superheroes, but they're also people. When Donna finally found out who she really was, I cried right along with her. I cried again at her wedding. It was the most beautiful wedding ever done in a comicbook. **Titans** is a people book, I like that.

Jon Westover
Duluth, MN

X-Men and **Titans** are soap opera books. Forced characters in forced situations that produce continuing dramas. Most comics are that way nowadays. That's not to say they're bad, in fact some are pretty good, but let's call them what they are.

For me, **X-Men** is the **Knots Landing** of comicbooks. **Knots Landing** has superb writing, acting, and plotting. Not only that but the story actually moves along each week. Political overtones and an ever-changing cast of characters make it the best of the prime time soaps. Change doesn't bother them. And, like the X-Men, you have to watch it (or read it as the case may be) several times to realize how good it really is.

Teen Titans, on the other hand, is more like **Dynasty** or **Dallas.** More of the same, slow moving plots, with actors who can't make stale writing look good. One of the dumbest stories was when Donna discovered who she "really was." How could anybody with such a well adjusted life, super-supportive adoptive family and friends, fantastic career and future husband be so obsessed about finding out who her "real family" is. Marv Wolfman created drama and conflict where none should have existed. If you suddenly found out today that **you** were adopted, would you suddenly be a **different person?** Of course not. Everything that you are is because of what has happened to you, not what hasn't. People who go looking to find themselves will probably never find anyone home.

". . . Baxter beats Mando everytime . . ."

Lisa Klein
Chicago, IL

The X-Men haven't been very good since John Byrne left. Claremont still writes really good, but the artwork on the book has really been B-A-D. The X-Men deserve better. Dave Cockrum was OK, but Paul Smith and John Romita Jr. don't even bother to draw anyting. They just put a few basic lines down and call it "art."

George Perez was on the **Titans** long enough to give them "a look." DC was smart enough to get someone like Barreto to replace him. The **Titans** still look great. Marv Wolfman writes super stories, too. All of his characters are filled with real human emotions. He also writes stories that are just plain fun. **X-Men** are good, too, but the **Titans** are better.

. . . as Frank Miller had with his on Daredevil . . .

Robert T. Jeschonek
Johnstown, PA

Hmmmmm.

Which book is better - **The New Teen Titans** or **The Uncanny X-Men?** That's a good question, one that has been pondered and argued since **The New Teen Titans** debuted; it was a book with many similarities to Marvel Comics' mutant book. . . and yet it was unique in many ways. So which is better?

My answer: **neither.**

That's right. At this point in time, I honestly feel that neither book is any better or worse than the other. Both series are currently experiencing a creative depression, a stagnation that has sapped the very spark which made them great in the first place.

And both books **were great.** There is absolutely no doubt about that. They revolutionized the standards of storytelling and art in the comic book world, reintroduced the three-dimensional character in an era when it had virtually disappeared. **New Teen Titans** and **X-Men** were to comics in the 80's what **Fantastic Four, Spiderman,** and the **Hulk** had been to the comics of the 60's - a **big breath** of fresh air, a regeneration, a new **beginning.** At a time when the great, human **Marvel characters** had also lost their depth, when Reed Richards, Ben Grimm, and Bruce Banner had become cardboard cutouts like all the rest, and their perpetual angst had become another comic book cliche - Cyclops, Storm, Wolverine, Colossus, and Nightcrawler **gave** the fans a new vision.

First the **X-Men,** and years later, the Titans, brought exciting new **life** into comics. They both introduced, or reintroduced, the concept of the super-hero group as ensemble, as a group of intensely real characters with distinct personalities. They explored the relationships between the members, their internal feelings and motivations, so the readers could better understand and sympathize with their creations. Both books were

"When it comes to which book I look forward to more. . . "X" marks the spot."

great, and **made** a fantastic contribution to the development of mainstream comics.

Today, however, 11 years after the debut of the **New X-Men** and six years after the beginning of the **New Teen Titans,** the ground breaking series are sinking fast. They are quickly losing ground, drifting into the river of mediocre trips where the majority of today's comics drown. It's too bad, because apparently sales are still good and the individual creators involved no longer feel they have to devote as much time and energy to putting out the high quality products they used to. Claremont and Wolfman seem to be falling into the traditional comic book trap, the belief that "the fans'll buy anything with the faces of these characters on it, so why bother putting so much work into the books?"

First off, let's take a look at the older of the two

series over the years - **X-Men**. Now, **X-Men** has been a strong and durable series over the years - it's 11 years old and the sales are still fantastic. However, over those 11 years, it has gradually faded, losing much of the vivid characterization, excitement, and originality which made it special in the first place.

For one thing, the characters have become bland and two dimensional, their individual quirks and traits rehashed for so long that they have become predictable. Wolverine is the savage animal, like he always was, struggling to retain his humanity; Nightcrawler is the fun loving rogue, using his jokes to conceal inner turmoil; Colossus is the proud, mighty, yet sensitive Russian; Rogue is tortured by the memory of Carol Danvers; and Kitty is the spunky, bright junior member. They're all the same as they were when first introduced; no real character growth or development has taken place over the years at all. Each time an X-Man launches into another anguished monologue over their secret inner pain, I find myself saying, "On no, not again!" The only character who truly changed is Storm, the real bright spot of the series in recent years. Storm has had her power stripped away, her life decimated, all that she has loved taken away; she

"In my opinion, nobody-- absolutely nobody --is a better artist than George Perez."

has truly become flesh and blood, real, a feeling, growing woman responding to life. In the beautiful "Lifedeath" and "Lifedeath II" stories, Storm is lovingly portrayed by Claremont and Windsor-Smith, an example of what the other X-Men could be if Claremont cared enough to develop them. It's funny. The finest X-Men today is the one who lost her powers.

Secondly, the plotline of the **X-Men** have become dull and pointless. There doesn't seem to be any direction, any plan to the series. The heroes fight one grim battle after another, usually against the growing ranks of mutant-haters, and they never seem to win a real victory. There is no originality, no new exciting villians or adventure - just the same old thing. Plus, the team is usually split up, with at least one member gone for several issues to participate in his or her new mini-series. This robs the book of the team flavor, of the great ensemble that made it so much fun before.

While I'm on the subject, spin-off fever has really hurt the **X-Men** series. Right now there are three X-Men books on the racks - **X-Men, New Mutants,** and **X-Factor,** plus another one, **The Misfits,** about to be released. The characters and concepts are spread too thin and it shows. How long can the creative teams hope to sustain this extended line of mutant comics and still maintain any semblance of quality and originality? They can't, and that's why all the books have become so weak and bland.

The recent tie-ins with **Secret Wars II** have disrupted the continuity as well, warping the characters in unbelievable ways. During that nine-issue maxi-series, there was an appearance by the Beyonder in almost every issue of **X-Men** whether he belonged there or not. Every appearance was irrelevant and made no contribution to the major plotline. The Beyonder would show up and do something which would end the battle, and the characters would agonize over how omnipotent he was and how they would never be able to defeat him. Rachel became obsessed with him and tried to kill him, which made absolutely no sense at all. It was all ridiculous, just an excuse to promote another series and rake in some more fan dollars.

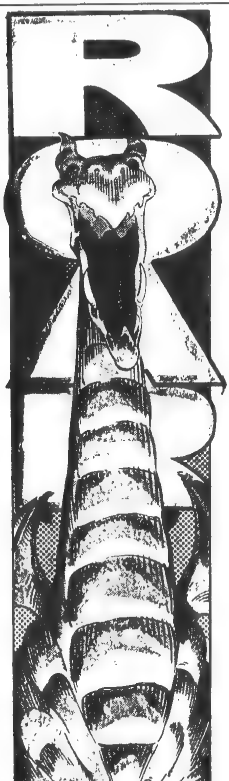
The writing of **X-Men** is definitely its current weak spot. The art by John Romita Jr. continues to be stylish and distinctive, and is by far the book's strongest point. Claremont, on the other hand, needs to rethink his characters, spice up his plots, give the books some direction, and lighten up on the voluminous thought balloons. More than all of that, he needs to put some fun back into the series. He said it himself, through Nightcrawler, in issue 204, "So long ago it seems like ancient history - being an X-Man was fun! We were mutants - outcasts from human society because of the powers we were born with - but our hearts were light! Now everything is grim. The joy - the romance - the innocence - all gone." All gone indeed. The characters are drab and neurotic, the stories dull and pointless, the team confined to a grim world of mutant haters and turmoil. The book needs a new angle. Until that time, the book is going nowhere, and is as bad as the **Titans.**

The strength of a comic book does not rest solely on its characters. There must also be energy, originality, and vitality - an intense and dedicated creativity. **Titans,** like **X-Men,** was once the zenith of these elements. It was a labor of love, and the love showed. Every issue was fresh and vibrant, humming with life. Each character was three-dimensional, intricately portrayed and wonderfully detailed. New and exciting characters were introduced frequently, adding to the depth of each personality. The plots were imaginative and original, full of fantastic and exotic elements, yet still based in firm, sometimes harsh, realism. I still remember those days - the formation of the team, the first battles with the Fatal Five, the search for the Doom Patrol, the return to Tamaran, the team-up with the Omega Men, Brother Blood, the discovery of Donna's true origin, and the spectacular "Judas Contract." Each book was a masterpiece, fresh and vivid and **different** from the rest of the comic book trash.

These days **NTT** is not so spectacular. I know I'm probably in the minority, however I'm sticking to my guns.

Like the **X-Men,** their personal traits have been

"If everyone in the Titans' cast of characters were bald. . . you'd still be able to recognize them."



. . . and both used these types of panels sucessfully time after time.

rehashed so much they have become predictable and blase'. Sure, Dick is anguished over losing Kory, and Kory is anguished at losing Dick, and Donna is concerned for both, and Gar is trying to help his step-dad. However, all character reactions seem typical, almost cardboard. There is no complexity, no more surprises.

There is a dearth in the plotting as well. Wolfman continues to fall back on old material. So far, over the last year, the book has featured the return of Trigon, the return of the Greek gods, and the return to Tamaran. The few new plot threads which have been sewn in have not been very interesting, either. Why did Wolfman bring Kole (the most boring Titan ever created) into the series in the first place? She had no

"Is this guy (Dave Cockrum) really a fan favorite or is it that he followed Byrne on X-Men and nobody could screw up its cult status?"

use, no purpose, and when she finally died she was hardly even missed. Joe Wilson mourned for a few panels, and that was it. It seems like Wolfman realized his mistake in creating Kole, and rectified it a few months later by killing her off in **Crisis**. It was just another example of the aimless plotlines currently in the book.

The artwork of this book is even bland. Though Eduardo Barreto has done some very fine, and stylish cover work at DC, his interiors are flat and unexciting, with no flair, no flash, and little variation of layout.

Ultimately, I feel the blame for the decline of **NNT** can be placed on another DC series, **Crisis on Infinite Earths**. Because of **Crisis**, the great George Perez had to leave the book. This removed one of the major guiding forces from the series; so far none of the subsequent artists have made the creative contributions that Perez made while working on the book. Marv's enthusiasm for **Crisis** left him less creative energy for **Titans** - and it showed.

Maybe someday Perez will find the time to return to **Titans**, and once again he and Wolfman will focus their energy on the series they made great so long ago

And so I've said my piece. Neither **X-Men** or **Teen Titans** is any better than the other, and certainly no better than books like **Swamp Thing, Love and Rockets**, or **Cerebus**. Just as they were once blasts of fresh air in the dull, dead world of comics, so do they now need a blast of fresh air, or renewed interest and creativity.

I like the characters in both groups, and I feel they have the potential to once again be great. I just hope it happens soon.

Paul Smith's most remembered rendition of Phoenix.

David A. Davidson
Lewistown, PA

Which book is better, the **X-Men** or the **Teen Titans?** Why?

Teen Titans is a better book than the **X-Men** at the present time, because of its smooth continuous main story lines. Recently, **Teen Titans** went from "Ghost Story" to some Crisis scenes to a battle with Mento to the lengthy Tamaran story; character developments and future plot setups were done in brief one or two page scenes. While in **X-Men,** Kitty and Colossus versus Arcade's robots, Storm in Africa, and Rachel's handling of the matrix crystal are scenes which have added depth to each of their characters, **but** it has been done with extended sequences in the absence of a main-group story line. Also, Kitty and Colossus' battle at Murderworld and the group's battle at the National Holocaust Memorial were jumped into with no explanation, before or after the fact, of how everyone got there. The one main-group story line of the past six months, Magneto's trial, ended in one double-sized issue with no decision reached. In conclusion, both books are first-rate, but until the **X-Men** begins a strong continuing story line, and quits overexpanding on items which should be subplots, the **Teen Titans** will remain the better book.

"Art Adams' recent annual was the best thing the X-Men have seen in a long time. Give him the book. Give him Titans, too."

Elray Butler
Kamuela, Hawaii

I think the **X-Men** is a better book than **Teen Titans** simply because they are more mature characters than the Titans. At times the X-Men may act childish, but not as childish as the Titans. The X-Men solve most of their problems with little or no outbursts, while the Teen Titans must always be nagged by Changling, thus throwing them off the main subject.

Another reason as to why the X-Men are better than the Titans is that they work as a team to defeat their foe, while the Titans usually work as individuals because of their power and experience differences. Since the X-Men work more as a team, their book is more exciting than the Titans'.

The **X-Men**'s plotline constantly changes and every change is as exciting as the one before. The Titan's changes, on the other hand, are not as exciting as the X-Men's. The X-Men meet and battle new foes while the Titans keep battling the same villians (Brother Blood, Fearsome Five, etc.) every issue, and they never seem to defeat them.

H.W. Natos
Gainseville, Florida

X-Men vs. Titans: Who's better?

The **Teen Titans.** Not only do they have the best writer and artists in comics with Wolfman, Perez, Tangahl, Garcia Lopez, and Barreto, they also have the best printed book. So even if both books were equal, Baxter beats Mando every time. Make mine **Teen Titans.**

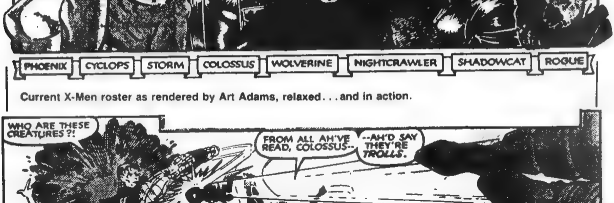
Jason Dean
Baltimore, MD

X-Men.

Sylvia Moore
Albany, WY

Teen Titans.

Current X-Men roster as rendered by Art Adams, relaxed . . . and in action.


WHO ARE THESE CREATURES?!
FROM ALL AH'VE READ, COLOSSUS--
--AH'D SAY THEY'RE TROLLS.
POOR THING.
HE'S ALIVE, WOLVIE-- BUT HE'S HURT AWFUL BAD!

Hoyt Vernard
Lycoming, PA

I like the X-Men because they've been around longer than the Teen Titans. Characters have a way of growing on you after awhile and I consider most of the X-Men old friends. I've never been an avid reader of the Titans because I never really warmed up to them. They always seemed a rip-off of my beloved X-Men. I know they're not, of course. Marv Wolfman has been quoted in a variety of magazines stating he did his best to make sure that the **Titans** didn't look like just another mutant book.

My biggest disappointment with **X-Men** is that it crosses over with so many other Marvel books, especially lately, which I don't read. I haven't read **New Mutants** since Bob McLeod left because I plain just don't like the other artists that replaced him. How is anybody suppose to follow a story that continues each month in another book that you can't even stand to look at? Do people actually like the way Bill Siekiewicz draws? Maybe when he leaves the book, I can start reading it again. It didn't always used to be that way. Before **New Mutants, X-Men** was easily the best comic book around. Now with that book, **X-Factor**, and the upcoming **Misfits**, and all of those continued storylines, I don't even feel like reading

"I don't like Marvel or DC much anymore."

BITS & PIECES (Part II)

Jennifer Waltons
New York, NY

I gave up on the Titans early on when all were walking down the street in their secret identities next to Kory, who stands out as Kory no matter what she wears, letting the whole world know who they really are. Couldn't you just see it, "Hey mom, that guy walking with Starfire is Dick Grayson. He must be Robin! That means Batman must be Bruce Wayne!" What if someone had taken a picture? Anyone could have figured it out eventually. Stupid writing. . .

. . .Let's not forget the "wasted issue" of **the Titans** where the Teen Titans chase and subdue the Fearsome Five only to let them get away at the end due to their "realistic bickering." The following issue simply repeated the previous one. Dumb. . .

. . .The X-Men aren't without their idiocy either. . .Dark Kitty, Dark Colossus and Dark Nightcrawler can't be too far around the corner.

Name and address illegible

If Chris Claremont would have written things other than comic books he would have written something like the **Dune** books. . .Marv Wolfman would have written **The Hardy Boys Vs. Nancy Drew. . .**

X-Men anymore. I'd like to just ignore those other books, but I can't because with all the crossover stories **X-Men** wouldn't make any sense without them.

"Perez has. . .still got a fan's enthusiasm for these kinds of projects."

Rich Liu
Comic People
Mt. Laurel, NJ

I'm in favor of the **New Teen Titans.**

Other people may say **X-Men** is better because the **CBG** poll says so. Not true, as a comic retailer myself I can tell you that most X-Men readers don't even read **Titans**, and of course the opposite is true as well. You really can't make a decision as to which book is better unless you actually do read them both.

To take it a step further, not only do I think you should **currently** be reading both books, you should have read most (if not all) of them **since they debuted** in order to come up with the best opinion. Throw in all the giants and annuals as well. After you've done all of that, you can make up your mind as to which is better. I've read all of the books I've mentioned and I prefer **Titans.**

Marv Wolfman and Chris Claremont are nearly equals as writers, but I have to give Wolfman the nod when it comes to plotting. Marv seems to have a definite story in mind when he writes, while Claremont drags along subplot after subplot as if he's waiting for something to happen himself. The deaths of two Titans, Terra and Kole, were well handled and thought out. The change of Robin to Nightwing was also a quick and sudden change once DC gave the go ahead. Marv has also introduced a number of interesting foes with not a "wimp" among them.

Marv seems to have planned out everything since issue number one came out, especially the Raven-Trigon saga and the Terra-Terminator relationship. Even the romance angle was approached with a long term outlook.

Chris Claremont is a good writer, though, it's just that he has a lot of ups and downs. Some of the "ups" include the loss of Storm's powers, Rogue joining the team, and the death of Phoenix. The "downs" include just about everything since issue 179. The future-history storyline was great and he has managed to bring parts of it back with the "New" Phoenix stories. I just hope he manages to leave out so much of the "old" Phoenix remembrances that have really started to drag. With the real Jean Grey back in **X-Factor** it should be a lot easier.

Now for the artists. George Perez has done about 85 percent of all the Titan books. His style is spectacular and he is easily one of the best in the business. Ed Barreto and Romeo Tanghal continue to give the book the look it deserves.

The **X-Men** have had a lot more artists. John Byrne made the X-Men look great, but Dave Cockrum, Paul Smith, and John Romita Jr. were only average. The X-Men deserve better.

Let's discuss the appearance of both groups for

"Naturally, my Titans' bias shows through."

awhile. The costumes for the Titans are original and flashy, and overall are excellent. The costumes of the X-Men are not as good as they should be ranging from great to ugly. In a contest, I'd say Prof. X is best dressed and Starfire is least dressed.

As long as I'm talking contests, Jericho has least thought balloons and Prof. X most. It's a toss up as to

Continued next issue

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